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# Chapter One

## The Spiritual Master and the Disciple

### The Four Defects of the Conditioned Soul

What are the Vedas? The Sanskrit verbal root of *veda* can be interpreted variously, but the purport is finally one. Veda means knowledge. Any knowledge you accept is veda, for the teachings of the Vedas are the original knowledge. In the conditioned state, our knowledge is subjected to many deficiencies. The difference between a conditioned soul and a liberated soul is that the conditioned soul has four kinds of defects. The first defect is that he must commit mistakes. For example, in our country, Mahatma Gandhi was considered to be a very great personality, but he committed many mistakes. Even at the last stage of his life, his assistant warned, "Mahatma Gandhi, don't go to the New Delhi meeting. I have some friends, and I have heard there is danger." But he did not hear. He persisted in going and was killed. Even great personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, President Kennedy -- there are so many of them -- make mistakes. To err is human. This is one defect of the conditioned soul.

Another defect: to be illusioned. Illusion means to accept something which is not: maya. Maya means "what is not." Everyone is accepting the body as the self. If I ask you what you are, you will say, "I am Mr. John; I am a rich man; I am this; I am that." All these are bodily identifications. But you are not this body. This is illusion.

The third defect is the cheating propensity. Everyone has the propensity to cheat others. Although a person is fool number one, he poses himself as very intelligent. Although it is already pointed out that he is in illusion and makes mistakes, he will theorize: "I think this is this, this is this." But he does not even know his own position. He writes books of philosophy, although he is defective. That is his disease. That is cheating.

Lastly, our senses are imperfect. We are very proud of our eyes. Often, someone will challenge, "Can you show me God?" But do you have the eyes to see God? You will never see if you haven't the eyes. If immediately the room becomes dark, you cannot even see your hands. So what power do you have to see? We cannot, therefore, expect knowledge (veda) with these imperfect senses. With all these deficiencies, in conditioned life we cannot give perfect knowledge to anyone. Nor are we ourselves perfect. Therefore we accept the Vedas as they are. (Sri Isopanisad p.vii f.)

Caitanya Mahaprabhu continued: "... The Vedic statements are self-evident. Whatever is stated there must be accepted. If we interpret according to our own imagination, the authority of the Vedas is immediately lost."



## PURPORT

Out of four main types of evidence -- direct perception, hypothesis, historical reference and the Vedas -- Vedic evidence is accepted as the foremost. If we want to interpret the Vedic version, we must imagine an interpretation according to what we want to do. First of all, we set forth such an interpretation as a suggestion or hypothesis. As such, it is not actually true, and the self-evident proof is lost.

Srila Madhvacarya, commenting on the aphorism *drsyate tu* (Vedanta-sutra 2.1.6), quotes the Bhavisya Purana as follows:

The Rg Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, Atharva Veda, Mahabharata, Pancaratra and original Ramayana are all considered Vedic literature. The Puranas (such as the Brahma-vaivarta Purana, Naradiya Purana, Visnu Purana and Bhagavata Purana) are especially meant for Vaisnavas and are also Vedic literature. As such, whatever is stated within the Puranas, Mahabharata and Ramayana is self-evident. There is no need for interpretation. The Bhagavad-gita is also within the Mahabharata; therefore all the statements of the Bhagavad-gita are self-evident. There is no need for interpretation, and if we do interpret, the entire authority of the Vedic literature is lost. (Cc. Madhya 6.137)

## The Process of Acquiring Knowledge

The Vedas are not compilations of human knowledge. Vedic knowledge comes from the spiritual world, from Lord Krsna. Another name for the Vedas is sruti. Sruti refers to that knowledge which is acquired by hearing. It is not experimental knowledge. Sruti is considered to be like a mother. We take so much knowledge from our mother. For example, if you want to know who your father is, who can answer you? Your mother. If the mother says, "Here is your father," you have to accept it. It is not possible to experiment to find out whether he is your father. Similarly, if you want to know something beyond your experience, beyond your experimental knowledge, beyond the activities of the senses, then you have to accept the Vedas. There is no question of experimenting. It has already been experimented. It is already settled. The version of the mother, for instance, has to be accepted as truth. There is no other way.

The Vedas are considered to be the mother, and Brahma is called the grandfather, the forefather, because he was the first to be instructed in the Vedic knowledge. In the beginning the first living creature was Brahma. He received this Vedic knowledge and imparted it to Narada and other disciples and sons, and they also distributed it to their disciples. In this way, the Vedic knowledge comes down by disciplic succession. It is also confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita that Vedic knowledge is understood in this way. If you make experimental endeavor, you come to the same conclusion, but just to save time you should accept. If you want to know who your father is and if you accept your mother as the authority, then whatever she says can be accepted without argument. There are three kinds of evidence: *pratyaksa*,



*anumana* and *sabda*. Pratyaksa means "direct evidence." Direct evidence is not very good because our senses are not perfect. We are seeing the sun daily, and it appears to us just like a small disc, but it is actually far, far larger than many planets. Of what value is this seeing? Therefore we have to read books; then we can understand about the sun. So direct experience is not perfect. Then there is *anumana*, inductive knowledge (ascending): "It may be like this" -- hypothesis. For instance, Darwin' s theory says it may be like this, it may be like that. But that is not science. That is a suggestion, and it is also not perfect. But if you receive the knowledge from the authoritative sources (descending), that is perfect. If you receive a program guide from the radio station authorities, you accept it. You don' t deny it; you don' t have to make an experiment, because it is received from the authoritative sources.

Vedic knowledge is called *sabda-pramana*. Another name is *sruti*. *Sruti* means that this knowledge has to be received simply by aural reception (descending process). The Vedas instruct that in order to understand transcendental knowledge, we have to hear from the authority. Transcendental knowledge is knowledge from beyond this universe. Within this universe is material knowledge, and beyond this universe is transcendental knowledge. We cannot even go to the end of the universe, so how can we go to the spiritual world? Thus to acquire full knowledge is impossible. (Sri Isopanisad p.ix ff.)

## The Importance of Hearing

The beginning of Krsna consciousness and devotional service is hearing, in Sanskrit called *sravanam*. All people should be given the chance to come and join devotional parties so that they may hear. This hearing is very important for progressing in Krsna consciousness. When one links his ears to give aural reception to the transcendental vibrations, he can quickly become purified and cleansed in the heart. Lord Caitanya has affirmed that this hearing is very important. It cleanses the heart of the contaminated soul so that he becomes quickly qualified to enter into devotional service and understand Krsna consciousness.

In the Garuda Purana the stress on hearing is expressed very nicely. It is said there, "The state of conditioned life in the material world is just like that of a man lying unconscious, having been bitten by a snake. This is because both such unconscious states can be ended by the sound of a mantra." When a man is snake-bitten he does not die immediately, but first becomes unconscious and remains in a comatose condition. Anyone who is in the material world is also sleeping, as he is ignorant of his actual self or his actual duty and his relationship with God. So materialistic life means that one is bitten by the snake of maya, illusion, and thus, without any Krsna consciousness, is almost dead. Now, the so-called dead man bitten by a snake can be brought back to life by the chanting of some mantra. There are expert chanters of these mantras who can perform this feat. Similarly, one can be brought back into Krsna consciousness from the deadly unconscious state of material life by hearing of the maha-mantra: Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.



In the Fourth Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam, Twenty-ninth Chapter, verse 40, the importance of hearing of the pastimes of the Lord is stated by Sukadeva Gosvami to Maharaja Pariksit: "My dear King, one should stay at a place where the great acaryas [holy teachers] speak about the transcendental activities of the Lord, and one should give aural reception to the nectarean river flowing from the moonlike faces of such great personalities. If someone eagerly continues to hear such transcendental sounds, then certainly he will become freed from all material hunger, thirst, fear and lamentation, as well as all illusions of material existence."

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu also recommended this process of hearing as a means of self-realization in the present age of Kali. In this age it is very difficult to follow thoroughly the regulative principles and studies of the Vedas which were formerly recommended. However, if one gives aural reception to the sound vibrated by great devotees and acaryas, that alone will give him relief from all material contamination. Therefore it is the recommendation of Caitanya Mahaprabhu that one should simply hear from authorities who are actually devotees of the Lord. Hearing from professional men will not help. If we hear from those who are actually self-realized, then the nectarean rivers, like those which are flowing on the moon planet, will flow into our ears. This is the metaphor used in the above verse.

As stated in Bhagavad-gita, "A materialistic person can give up his material hankerings only by becoming situated in Krsna consciousness." Unless one finds a superior engagement, he will not be able to give up his inferior engagement. In the material world everyone is engaged in the illusory activities of the inferior energy, but when one is given the opportunity to relish the activities of the superior energy performed by Krsna, then he forgets all his lesser pleasures. When Krsna speaks on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra, to the materialistic person it appears that this is simply talk between two friends, but actually it is a river of nectar flowing down from the mouth of Sri Krsna. Arjuna gave aural reception to such vibrations, and thus he became freed from all the illusions of material problems.

In the Twelfth Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam, Third Chapter, verse 15, it is stated, "A person who desires unalloyed devotional service to Lord Krsna, who is praised by transcendental sound vibrations, should always hear about His glorification and transcendental qualities. This will surely kill all kinds of inauspiciousness in the heart." (Nectar of Devotion p. 89 ff)

"Simply by giving aural reception to this Vedic literature, the feeling for loving devotional service to Lord Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, sprouts up at once to extinguish the fire of lamentation, illusion and fearfulness."

## PURPORT

There are various senses, of which the ear is the most effective. This sense works even when a man is deep asleep. One can protect himself from the hands of an enemy while awake, but while asleep one is protected by the ear only. The importance of hearing is mentioned here in



connection with attaining the highest perfection of life, namely, getting free from three material pangs. Everyone is full of lamentation at every moment, he is after the mirage of illusory things, and he is always afraid of his supposed enemy. These are the primary symptoms of material disease. And it is definitely suggested herein that simply by hearing the message of Srimad-Bhagavatam one gets attachment for the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Krsna, and as soon as this is effected the symptoms of the material diseases disappear. Srila Vyasadeva saw the all-perfect Personality of Godhead, and in this statement the all-perfect Personality of Godhead Sri Krsna is clearly confirmed.

Loving devotional service to the Lord begins with hearing about the Lord. There is no difference between the Lord and the subject matter heard about Him. The Lord is absolute in all respects, and thus there is no difference between Him and the subject matter heard about Him. Therefore, hearing about Him means immediate contact with Him by the process of vibration of the transcendental sound. And the transcendental sound is so effective that it acts at once by removing all material affections mentioned above. As mentioned before, a living entity develops a sort of complexity by material association, and the illusory encagement of the material body is accepted as an actual fact. Under such false complexity, the living beings under different categories of life become illusioned in different ways. Even in the most developed stage of human life, the same illusion prevails in the form of many isms and divides the loving relation with the Lord and thereby divides the loving relation between man and man. By hearing the subject matter of Srimad-Bhagavatam this false complexity of materialism is removed, and real peace in society begins, which politicians aspire for so eagerly in so many political situations. The politicians want a peaceful situation between man and man, and nation and nation, but at the same time, because of too much attachment for material domination, there is illusion and fearfulness. Therefore the politicians' peace conferences cannot bring about peace in society. It can only be done by hearing the subject matter described in the Srimad-Bhagavatam about the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Krsna. The foolish politicians may go on holding peace and summit conferences for hundreds of years, but they will fail to achieve success. Until we reach the stage of reestablishing our lost relation with Krsna, the illusion of accepting the body as the self will prevail, and thus fearfulness will also prevail. As for the validity of Sri Krsna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, there are hundreds and thousands of evidences from revealed scriptures, and there are hundreds and thousands of evidences from personal experiences of devotees in various places like Vrndavana, Navadvipa and Puri. Even in the Kaumudi dictionary the synonyms of Krsna are given as the son of Yasoda and the Supreme Personality of Godhead Parabrahman. The conclusion is that simply by hearing the Vedic literature Srimad-Bhagavatam, one can have direct connection with the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Krsna, and thereby one can attain the highest perfection of life by transcending worldly miseries, illusion and fearfulness. These are practical tests for one who has actually given a submissive hearing to the readings of the Srimad-Bhagavatam. (Srimad Bhagavatam 1.7.7)



om ajnana-timirandhasya  
jnananjana-salakaya  
caksur unmilitam yena  
tasmai sri-gurave namah

"I offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, who with the torchlight of knowledge has opened my eyes, which were blinded by the darkness of ignorance with the torchlight of knowledge." (Gautamiya Tantra)

## **The Need for a Guru**

### **To Solve the Problems of Life**

"Now I am confused about my duty and have lost all composure because of miserly weakness. In this condition I am asking You to tell me for certain what is best for me. Now I am Your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me."

#### **PURPORT**

By nature's own way the complete system of material activities is a source of perplexity for everyone. In every step there is perplexity, and therefore it behooves one to approach a bona fide spiritual master who can give one proper guidance for executing the purpose of life. All Vedic literatures advise us to approach a bona fide spiritual master to get free from the perplexities of life, which happen without our desire. They are like a forest fire that somehow blazes without being set by anyone. Similarly, the world situation is such that perplexities of life automatically appear, without our wanting such confusion. No one wants fire, and yet it takes place, and we become perplexed. The Vedic wisdom therefore advises that in order to solve the perplexities of life and to understand the science of the solution, one must approach a spiritual master who is in the disciplic succession. A person with a bona fide spiritual master is supposed to know everything. One should not, therefore, remain in material perplexities but should approach a spiritual master. (Bhagavad gita 2.7)

### **To Receive Perfect Knowledge**

"Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth."

#### **PURPORT**

The path of spiritual realization is undoubtedly difficult. The Lord therefore advises us to



approach a bona fide spiritual master in the line of disciplic succession from the Lord Himself. No one can be a bona fide spiritual master without following this principle of disciplic succession. The Lord is the original spiritual master, and a person in the disciplic succession can convey the message of the Lord as it is to his disciple. No one can be spiritually realized by manufacturing his own process, as is the fashion of the foolish pretenders. The Bhagavatam (6.3.19) says, dharmam tu saksad bhagavat-pranitam: the path of religion is directly enunciated by the Lord. Therefore, mental speculation or dry arguments cannot help lead one to the right path. Nor by independent study of books of knowledge can one progress in spiritual life. One has to approach a bona fide spiritual master to receive the knowledge. (Bhagavad gita 4.34)

tasmad gurum prapadyeta  
jijnasuh sreya uttamam  
sabde pare ca nisnatam  
brahmany upasamasrayam

"Any person who is seriously desirous of achieving real happiness must seek out a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation. The qualification of a spiritual master is that he must have realized the conclusion of the scriptures by deliberation and arguments and thus be able to convince others of these conclusions. Such great personalities, who have taken complete shelter of the Supreme Godhead, leaving aside all material considerations, are to be understood as bona fide spiritual masters." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.3.21)

## Qualifications of the Spiritual Master

### Teachings

In the process of devotional service, the first step is to take shelter of the spiritual master and then inquire from the spiritual master all about the process. This inquiry is essential for immunity to all kinds of offenses on the path of devotional service. Even if one is fixed in devotional service like Maharaja Pariksit, he must still inquire from the realized spiritual master all about this. In other words, the spiritual master must also be well versed and learned so that he may be able to answer all these inquiries from the devotees. Thus one who is not well versed in the authorized scriptures and not able to answer all such relevant inquiries should not pose as a spiritual master for the matter of material gain. It is illegal to become a spiritual master if one is unable to deliver the disciple. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 2.8.7)

A spiritual master never poses as the Supreme Lord Himself; he is considered a representative of the Lord. The revealed scriptures prohibit one's pretending to be God, but a bona fide spiritual master is a most faithful and confidential servant of the Lord and therefore deserves as much respect as Krsna. (Cc Adi 1.44, purport)



## Realization

“One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of *uttama-adhikari*...”

The *uttama-adhikari*, or highest devotee, is one who is very advanced in devotional service. An *uttama-adhikari* is not interested in blaspheming others, his heart is completely clean, and he has attained the realized state of unalloyed Kṛṣṇa consciousness. According to Srila Rupa Gosvami, the association and service of such a *maha-bhagavata*, or perfect Vaisnava, are most desirable...

Out of many [bonafide] Vaisnavas, one may be found to be very seriously engaged in the service of the Lord and strictly following all the regulative principles, chanting the prescribed number of rounds on japa beads and always thinking of how to expand the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Such a Vaisnava should be accepted as an *uttama-adhikari*, a highly advanced devotee, and his association should always be sought...

When a person realizes himself to be an eternal servitor of Kṛṣṇa, he loses interest in everything but Kṛṣṇa's service. Always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, devising means by which to spread the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, he understands that his only business is in spreading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world. Such a person is to be recognized as an *uttama-adhikari*, and his association should be immediately accepted according to the six processes (*dadati pratigrhñati*, etc.). Indeed, the advanced *uttama-adhikari* Vaisnava devotee should be accepted as a spiritual master...

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has given some practical hints to the effect that an *uttama-adhikari* Vaisnava can be recognized by his ability to convert many fallen souls to Vaisnavism (Nectar of Instruction, Text 5)

A conditioned soul is hampered by four defects: he is sure to commit mistakes, he is sure to become illusioned, he has a tendency to cheat others, and his senses are imperfect.

Consequently we have to take direction from liberated persons. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement directly receives instructions from the Supreme Personality of Godhead via persons who are strictly following His instructions. Although a follower may not be a liberated person, if he follows the supreme, liberated Personality of Godhead, his actions are naturally liberated from the contamination of the material nature. Lord Caitanya therefore says: “By My order you may become a spiritual master.” One can immediately become a spiritual master by having full faith in the transcendental words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and by following His instructions. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 4.18.5, purport)

## Disciplic Succession

The Upanisads inform us that the guru is one who has received knowledge by hearing the Vedas. *Srotṛiyam brahma-niṣṭham* [Mundaka Upanisad 1.2.12]. The Vedas are called *śruti*, and the bona fide guru is in the line of hearing from the disciplic succession. As stated in Bhagavad-gītā (4.2), *evam parampara-prāptam*. A bona fide guru does not impart some self-





styled, concocted knowledge; his knowledge is standard and received from the parampara system. He is also firmly fixed in the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (brahmanistham). These are his two qualifications: he must have heard the Vedic knowledge through the disciplic succession, and he must be established in service to the Supreme Lord. He does not have to be a very learned scholar, but he must have heard from the proper authority. (Teachings of Lord Kapila, p. 33)

## Character

One should not accept as a spiritual master someone who is fool number one, who has no direction according to the scriptural injunctions, whose character is doubtful, who does not follow the principles of devotional service, or who has not conquered the influence of the six sense-gratifying agents. The six agents of sense gratification are the tongue, the genitals, the belly, anger, the mind and words. Anyone who has practiced controlling these six is permitted to make disciples all over the world.

(Nectar of Devotion, p 58)

## Liberating Others

According to shastra, the duty of the guru is to take the disciple back home, back to Godhead. If he is unable to do so and instead hinders the disciple in going back to Godhead, he should not be guru. *Guru na sa syat* (Bhag. 5.5.18). One should not become a guru if he cannot enable his disciple to advance in Krsna consciousness. The goal of life is to become a devotee of Lord Krsna so that one may be freed from the bondage of material existence (*tyaktva deham punar janma naiti mam eti so 'rjuna* [Bg. 4.9]). The spiritual master helps the disciple attain this stage by developing Krsna consciousness. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 8.20.1)

## Activities

“Some behave very well but do not preach the cult of Krsna consciousness, whereas others preach but do not behave properly. You simultaneously perform both duties in relation to the holy name by your personal behavior and by your preaching. Therefore you are the spiritual master of the entire world, for you are the most advanced devotee in the world.”

## PURPORT

Sanatana Gosvami clearly defines herein the bona fide spiritual master of the world. The qualifications expressed in this connection are that one must act according to the scriptural injunctions and at the same time preach. One who does so is a bona fide spiritual master. Haridasa Thakura was the ideal spiritual master because he regularly chanted on his beads a



prescribed number of times. Indeed, he was chanting the holy name of the Lord 300,000 times a day. Similarly, the members of the Krsna consciousness movement chant a minimum of sixteen rounds a day, which can be done without difficulty, and at the same time they must preach the cult of Caitanya Mahaprabhu according to the gospel of Bhagavad-gita As It Is. One who does so is quite fit to become a spiritual master for the entire world. (Cc Antya 4.102-3)

## Guru Shastra Sadhu

*Sadhu-sastra-guru*: one has to test all spiritual matters according to the instructions of saintly persons, scriptures and the spiritual master. The spiritual master is one who follows the instructions of his predecessors, namely the sadhus, or saintly persons. A bona fide spiritual master does not mention anything not mentioned in the authorized scriptures. Ordinary people have to follow the instructions of sadhu, sastra and guru. Those statements made in the sastras and those made by the bona fide sadhu or guru cannot differ from one another. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 4.16.1)

## Qualifications of the Disciple

### Submissive Inquiry

“Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. “

#### PURPORT

A spiritual master should be accepted in full surrender, and one should serve the spiritual master like a menial servant, without false prestige. Satisfaction of the self-realized spiritual master is the secret of advancement in spiritual life. Inquiries and submission constitute the proper combination for spiritual understanding. Unless there is submission and service, inquiries from the learned spiritual master will not be effective. (Bhagavad-gita, 4.34)

It is not that we should blindly surrender, but we should be able to inquire with intelligence. Without inquiry, we cannot make advancement. In school a student who makes inquiries from the teacher is usually an intelligent student. It is generally a sign of intelligence when a small child inquires from his father, “Oh, what is this? What is that?” We may have a very good spiritual master, but if we have no power to inquire, we cannot make progress...

The beginning injunction of the Vedanta-sūtra is: athato brahma jijñāsa. “Now is the time to inquire about Brahman.” The word atha means that one who is intelligent, who has come to the point of realizing the basic frustrations of material life, is capable of making inquiry. In Srimad-Bhagavatam it is stated that one should inquire from a spiritual master about subjects



that are “beyond this darkness.” This material world is by nature dark, and it is artificially lighted by fire. Our inquiries should be about the transcendental worlds which lie beyond this universe. If one is desirous to find out about these spiritual worlds, he should seek out a spiritual master; otherwise there is no point in searching...

It is not that we are to submit ourselves blindly. The spiritual master may be self-realized and situated in the Absolute Truth, yet we have to question him in order to understand all spiritual points. (Raja Vidya, p.75-76, 87)

## Obedience

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti also advises that if we want to be successful in our attempt to go back to Godhead, we must very seriously act according to the instruction of the spiritual master. That is the way of perfection. There need be no anxiety over attaining perfection because if one follows the instruction given by the spiritual master he is sure to attain perfection. Our only concern should be how to execute the order of the spiritual master. A spiritual master is expert in giving special instructions to each of his disciples, and if the disciple executes the order of the spiritual master, that is the way of his perfection. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 4.8.71)

## Sincerity

“I was very much attached to those sages. I was gentle in behavior, and all my sins were eradicated in their service. In my heart I had strong faith in them. I had subjugated the senses, and I was strictly following them with body and mind.”

## PURPORT

These are the necessary qualifications of a prospective candidate who can expect to be elevated to the position of a pure unadulterated devotee. Such a candidate must always seek the association of pure devotees. One should not be misled by a pseudodevotee. He himself must be plain and gentle to receive the instructions of such a pure devotee. A pure devotee is a completely surrendered soul unto the Personality of Godhead. He knows the Personality of Godhead as the supreme proprietor and all others as His servitors. And by the association of pure devotees only, one can get rid of all sins accumulated by mundane association. A neophyte devotee must faithfully serve the pure devotee, and he should be very much obedient and strictly follow the instructions. These are the signs of a devotee who is determined to achieve success even in the existing duration of life. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.5.29)

“Your book should describe the characteristics of the bona fide guru and the bona fide disciple. Then, before accepting a spiritual master, one can be assured of the spiritual master’s position. Similarly, the spiritual master can also be assured of the disciple’s position.”



## PURPORT

The qualifications of a bona fide disciple are described in Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.10.6) as follows:

amanya-matsaro dakso nirmamo drdha-sauhrdah  
asatvaro ' rthāijnasur anasuyur amogha-vak

The disciple must have the following qualifications. He must give up interest in the material bodily conception. He must give up material lust, anger, greed, illusion, madness and envy. He should be interested only in understanding the science of God, and he should be ready to consider all points in this matter. He should no longer think, "I am this body," or, "This thing belongs to me." One must love the spiritual master with unflinching faith, and one must be very steady and fixed. The bona fide disciple should be inquisitive to understand transcendental subject matter. He must not search out faults among good qualities, and he should no longer be interested in material topics. His only interest should be Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. (Cc Madhya 24.330)

## Parampara: The Disciplic Succession

Perfect knowledge is called parampara, or deductive knowledge coming down from the authority to the submissive aural receiver who is bona fide by service and surrender. One cannot challenge the authority of the Supreme and know Him also at the same time. He reserves the right of not being exposed to such a challenging spirit of an insignificant spark of the whole, a spark subjected to the control of illusory energy. The devotees are submissive, and therefore the transcendental knowledge descends from the Personality of Godhead to Brahma and from Brahma to his sons and disciples in succession. This process is helped by the Supersoul within such devotees. That is the perfect way of learning transcendental knowledge. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.2.21)

Bhagavata-dharma, the principles of religion is understandable if one follows the parampara system of Lord Brahma, Lord Siva, the four Kumaras and the other standard authorities. There are four lines of disciplic succession: one from Lord Brahma, one from Lord Siva, one from Laksmi, the goddess of fortune, and one from the Kumaras. The disciplic succession from Lord Brahma is called the Brahma-sampradaya, the succession from Lord Siva (Sambhu) is called the Rudra-sampradaya, the one from the goddess of fortune, Laksmiji, is called the Sri-sampradaya, and the one from the Kumaras is called the Kumara-sampradaya. The complete name of our sampradaya is brahma-madhva-gaudiya. One must take shelter of one of these four sampradayas in order to understand the most confidential religious system. In the Padma Purana it is said, sampradaya-vihina ye mantras te nisphala matah: if one does not follow the



four recognized disciplic successions, his mantra or initiation is useless. In the present day there are many apasampradayas, or sampradayas which are not bona fide, which have no link to authorities like Lord Brahma, Lord Siva, the Kumaras or Laksmi. People are misguided by such sampradayas. The sastras say that being initiated in such a sampradaya is a useless waste of time, for it will never enable one to understand the real religious principles. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.3.20-21)

## Siksa and Diksa Gurus

‘I offer my respectful obeisances unto the spiritual masters, the devotees of the Lord, the Lord’s incarnations, His plenary portions, His energies and the primeval Lord Himself, Sri Krsna Caitanya.’

### PURPORT

*Gurun* is plural in number because anyone who gives spiritual instructions based on the revealed scriptures is accepted as a spiritual master (siksa). Although others give help in showing the way to beginners, the guru who first initiates one with the maha-mantra is to be known as the initiator (diksa), and the saints who give instructions for progressive advancement in Krsna consciousness are called instructing spiritual masters. The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal and identical manifestations of Krsna, although they have different dealings. Their function is to guide the conditioned souls back home, back to Godhead. (Cc Adi 1.34)

The first person who introduces us to Krishna consciousness (regardless of status), is called vartma-pradarsaka guru.

## Initiation

### Purpose

This relationship is established by connecting oneself with the bona fide spiritual master, who is the direct representative of Krsna in disciplic succession. Therefore, the execution of Krsna conscious activities with the body should be directed by the spiritual master and then performed with faith. The connection with the spiritual master is called initiation. From the date of initiation by the spiritual master, the connection between Krsna and a person cultivating Krsna consciousness is established. Without initiation by a bona fide spiritual master, the actual connection with Krsna consciousness is never performed. (Nectar of Devotion, p. xx)

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu continued, ‘...In the beginning there must be faith. Then one becomes interested in associating with pure devotees. Thereafter one is initiated by the spiritual master



and executes the regulative principles under his orders. Thus one is freed from all unwanted habits and becomes firmly fixed in devotional service. Thereafter, one develops taste and attachment. This is the way of sadhana-bhakti, the execution of devotional service according to the regulative principles. Gradually emotions intensify, and finally there is an awakening of love. This is the gradual development of love of Godhead for the devotee interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.’ (Cc Madhya, 23.14-15)

It is the spiritual master who delivers the disciple from the clutches of maya by initiating him into the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa maha-mantra. In this way a sleeping human being can revive his consciousness by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. In other words, the spiritual master awakens the sleeping living entity to his original consciousness so that he can worship Lord Viṣṇu. This is the purpose of dikṣa, or initiation. Initiation means receiving the pure knowledge of spiritual consciousness. (Cc Madhya, 9.61)

## Qualifications

"In your book should describe the characteristics of the bona fide guru and the bona fide disciple. Then, before accepting a spiritual master, one can be assured of the spiritual master's position. Similarly, the spiritual master can also be assured of the disciple's position..."

## PURPORT

A disciple's qualifications must be observed by the spiritual master before he is accepted as a disciple. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, the requirement is that one must be prepared to give up the four pillars of sinful life -- illicit sex, meat-eating, intoxication and gambling. In Western countries especially, we first observe whether a potential disciple is prepared to follow the regulative principles. Then he is given the name of a Vaisnava servant and initiated to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa maha-mantra, at least sixteen rounds daily. In this way the disciple renders devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master or his representative for at least six months to a year. He is then recommended for a second initiation, during which a sacred thread is offered and the disciple is accepted as a bona fide brahmana. (Cc Madhya, 24.330)